

VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Governor's Mansion, The Inn at Essex, 70 Essex Way, Essex, Vermont
June 14-15, 2010

The State Board and Department of Education provide leadership, support and oversight to ensure that the Vermont public education system enables each student to be successful.

APPROVED MINUTES

The current month's meeting agenda and packet materials may be accessed electronically at:
<http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/board/schedule.html#packet>

Present

Board Members: Chair Fayneese Miller; Kathy Larsen, Vice-chair; Ruth Stokes, Vice-chair; Don Collins; Brian Vachon; Stephan Morse; John Hall; Alex Melville; Robert Kelley (Tuesday); Judith Livingston (Tuesday)

DOE: Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner; Carol King; Jill Remick; Bill Talbott; Susan Marks; Rae Ann Knopf

Other: Sherry Gile, VTNEA; Rep. Anne Mook; Retta Dunlap; Brian Howe, VSBPE; Mike Deweese, Superintendent; Rep. Linda Waite-Simpson; Judy DeNova; David Wells; Rep. Martha Heath; Rep. Johannah Donovan; Rep. Frank Geier; Joel Cook, VTNEA; Rep. John Zenie; Ken Page, VPA; Rep. Peter Peltz; Jeff Francis, VSA; John Nelson, VSBA; Mel Moore; David Ruff; Martha Allen, VTNEA

Preliminaries

Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance

Fayneese Miller, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m., and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item B: Roll Call and Introductions

Chair, Board members, introduced themselves, as did others in attendance.

Item C: Announcements, Board Member Updates (Chair, Board Members)

Miller just returned from the NASBE (National Association of State Boards of Education) 21st Century Technology Teacher study group meeting, at which attendees discussed what the expectations would be on 21st Century educators and what would be provided by higher education and professional standards. They also discussed school structure; eliminating Carnegie units; online learning; and measuring mastery not seat time. Miller would like Vermont examples of innovation to be used as examples in these national documents. Vermont is one of the few states in which the State Board does not have authority over professional standards (the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators).

NASBE has also formed a task force for rural and frontier states. Miller is participating in those conversations on behalf of Vermont and wants to ensure that the definition does not get so inclusive that Vermont's interests are lost. There was also discussion of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools and the other initiatives coming out of USED, such as firing the principal

and a majority of the teachers, for example, and how that might affect Vermont students and schools. Deputy commissioner Rae Ann Knopf informed the Board of the current work at the State level regarding online learning.

The Redistricting Commission created by the Board has held its initial meeting. Board member Stephan Morse is chairing the committee, and he lauded the membership. Morse also reported that he will attend the NASBE new Board member training in July.

Miller reported that there will be a rural student summit at Lyndon Institute on Friday, June 18, and that she will be attending.

The Board also discussed funding for members to participate in national task forces, as in some cases they need to pay their own way. Members discussed asking businesses or other outside funding to support the Board's participation in this national work. Currently the department does not have staff dedicated to grant writing. The Board asked to see its specific budget.

Item D: Public to be Heard

Retta Dunlap, executive director of EdWatch Vermont, discussed the recently passed legislation, specifically H.66. She served on the Transformation Policy Commission and was disappointed with the way the Legislature focused on governance and not the other components of Transformation. She is also concerned about the responsibilities of the Supervisory Union Board which are disconnected from the public. She expressed concern about the regional education districts (REDs) and the impact of school choice on tuitioning towns. She also questioned the references she has heard that the Vermont Constitution instituted public schools.

Stokes commented that the redistricting commission will keep the school choice information in the forefront. Morse asked what Dunlap suggested the commission consider in light of her concerns on H.66. She suggested that it would not provide cost savings, that it is complicated. The commission's next meeting is June 23 at the Statehouse, future meeting dates will be posted online, and the commission may consider hosting hearings across the state.

Item E: Commissioner's Update (Commissioner)

Armando Vilaseca updated the Board on the end of the 2010 legislative session. He also discussed the Education Week release of Vermont's graduation rate as compared to other states. Vermont is second in the country, with one of the highest increases as well. However, he clarified that this still means that around 1,000 of Vermont's students still do not complete high school in four years. The department will be releasing an update on this within the next week. Vilaseca noted this does not reflect students who graduated on different timelines or received a General Equivalency Diploma (GED).

Commissioner Vilaseca will be the keynote speaker at Colchester High School graduation on Friday, June 18.

Item F: Legislative and Budget Updates (Armando Vilaseca, Bill Talbott)

CFO and Deputy Commissioner Bill Talbott updated the Board on H.66 (now Act 153 of 2010). The budget did pass as proposed. The department has several retirees and vacancies and new employees.

Talbott represented Vilaseca in South Dakota at a rural chiefs meeting Tom Oster, commissioner of South Dakota, hosted as part of an initiative shared by Vilaseca and other rural state chiefs/commissioners. The theme was how rural and frontier states would be treated under the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), especially regarding the four turnaround models required by SIG participation. Principal Shelley Mathias of Blue Mountain Union School recently did a study that supported the questions of the four turnaround models (i.e. it takes more than changing the principal to make changes at a school). None of the states that attended the rural chiefs meeting received the Longitudinal Data System (LDS) grant. Different states have different capabilities for student information systems.

The figure 23.2 million dollars was outlined in Challenges for Change legislation for school districts to reduce from the FY2011 amount. By August 1, the department is responsible for providing an education spending reduction target for FY 2012 to each supervisory union/district and regional technical center school district. Each supervisory union will need to determine, by December 15, how those reduction targets will be distributed among its member districts, the supervisory union assessment and any technical center assessment. The commissioner then has to report, by January 15, 2011, the final results to the Legislature including a detailed plan on how to make up any shortfall. Commissioner Vilaseca recently communicated this information to the field in a memo dated June 7, 2010 (see http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/dept/commissioner_memos/educ_memo_060710_H792E1.pdf).

Action Items

Item G: Consent Agenda

Motion: Stephan Morse moved, seconded by Brian Vachon, to approve the consent agenda, with comment. The motion passed unanimously (8-0). Mark Oettinger will be asked to prepare and send a legislative summary.

1. Minutes of May 18, 2010 SBE Meeting

2. Independent School Approval (Pat Pallas Gray)

Initial general and special education independent school approval:

- LiHigh School, Poultney, VT; ages 11-22

Initial tutorial approval:

- Beckley Day Program, Barre, VT; grades 1-5

Initial Other Education Program (teen parent education) approval:

- Addison County Parent Child Center's Teen Parent Education Program, Middlebury, VT; grades 9-12
- Brook Street Family Literacy Center's Teen Parent Education Program, Barre, VT; grades 9-12
- Sunrise Family Resource Center's Teen Parent Education Program, Bennington, VT; grades 9-12
- Rutland County Parent Child Center's Teen Parent Education Program, Rutland, VT; grades 9-12
- Springfield Area Parent Child Center's Teen Parent Education Program, Springfield, VT; grades 9-12
- Northeast Kingdom's Community Action's Teen Parent Education Program, St. Johnsbury; grades 9-12

3. Statewide waiver for excess carryover due to ARRA funding (David Baroudi)

Discussion Items

Item H: Emergency Rules: Proposed State Rules for the Use of Restraints & Seclusion in Schools (Armando Vilaseca, Susan Marks)

Vilaseca explained that there is no State Board rule regarding restraints and seclusions. National movements speak to the need for a rule to be implemented because there is so little guidance currently. Susan Marks, legal counsel, spoke to the Board, noting there are current bills in Congress addressing this. The department has proposed language and Marks outlined a timeline, allowing for public comment, for implementation of these rules. Board members questioned how, if at all, the rules would change current protocol in Vermont schools. Marks noted the need for guidelines and trainings to ensure safety, appropriateness and consistency.

John Hall expressed concerns about some of the language in 4501.2 (d) and (e).

The proposed rule would apply to approved independent schools as well.

Vilaseca read an e-mail received that morning from VT-NEA Executive Director Joel Cook regarding the proposed rules, requesting not using emergency rules for this process. Knopf also noted that the department already provides training statewide at no charge.

The Board took a brief break before the Martha H. O'Connor Award recognition.

Item I: Recognition

Annual Martha H O'Connor Award

The Board recognized this year's recipient of the Martha H. O'Connor Award, Martha P. Heath of Westford. Heath is a resident of Westford and chair of the Westford School Board and a state legislator, and was recognized for her continued contributions to Vermont education and students by State Board members in the lunchtime ceremony. Other attendees include Mike Deweese, superintendent; Rep. Linda Waite-Simpson; Judy DeNova; Rep. Johannah Donovan. Heath was nominated by Westford Elementary School Principal David Wells. In his nomination, Wells stated, "She possesses the grace, balance and good humor that allows her to listen to and balance the needs of her constituents. Martha is often drawn to causes that bring a lot of hard work but yield many benefits for Vermont's children and communities."

Chair Miller led the recognition of Heath, stating that she was honored and humbled to be able to present that award to Heath, noting she has epitomized Martha O'Connor's qualities: keeping children at the top of the equation; demonstrated leadership, grace and humor; and remaining resolute in difficult times. Several others spoke in recognition of Heath's dedication. The department also released a press release announcing her recognition.

Miller also recognized the contribution of outgoing student Board member Alex Melville, and presented him with a lamp which included his years of service and his name.

Lunch – The Board adjourned for lunch at 12:35 p.m.

Chair Miller called the meeting back to order at 1:23 p.m.

Item J: Roundtable Discussion (House and Senate Education Committee members; Partners; Others)

The purpose of the session was to bring together some of the main Vermont education ideas and to be clear on which organizations have which responsibilities in order to contribute to the development of the strategic plan. David Ruff of Great Schools Partnership facilitated. Attendees included: Rep. Linda Waite-Simpson; Sherry Gile (VT-NEA); Joel Cook (VT-NEA); Martha Allen (VT-NEA); Rep. John Zenie; Rep. Frank Geier; Ken Page (VPA); Rep. Anne Mook; Retta Dunlap (EdWatch Vermont); Rep. Peter Peltz; Jeff Francis (VSA); John Nelson (VSBA); Rep. Joey Donovan; Brian Howe (VSBPE); Mel Moore.

Ruff shared a Roles and Responsibilities document from the Board's previous strategic plan (approximately six years ago). The goal is to come to a joint understanding.

Roundtable discussion comments included:

- It is not substantive but philosophical
- It is unclear where the accountability of the Board lies
- The board is unique in Vermont in its autonomy but it is not unique across the country
- Vermont has outstanding student outcomes and the local boards are where the accountability lies
- It is missing partnerships with local boards and administrators
- A longitudinal data system should be integrated into the plan
- Where does the Board stand in the dialogue of budget cuts across the state at the local level which will negatively impact the student outcomes of which Vermont is proud
- What do we want from the State Board
- Disconnect between what is set in statute and what the Board does
- Is what is required in statute the right thing?
- Connecting the Board to the other organizations who work closely with the commissioner and the Legislature
- The Board's relevance is reduced by access and time
- The Board cannot get the same in-depth context to issues that the commissioner and legislators do (and it is filtered through the DOE)
- The Board is a policy-setting entity and may not need that level of detail
- Perhaps the four organizations should be on the agenda each month
- The Board's redistricting commission is seen as in conflict with the recent legislation and may be discouraging school board discussions
- The field has significant concerns about the capacity at the DOE
- Transformation document has had an impact
- Why is the Board continuing to look at redistricting – the local districts and the Legislature are not supportive of this
- Change roles and responsibilities to how can we coordinate
- There is a disconnect between the message the State Board is giving and the general public
- Lacks information on access, quality, outcomes
- DOE and State Board can have all the vision, but without the governor (administration) and the legislature behind it, it won't go anywhere
- Should the Board have played a role in getting some buy in from the Legislature on Transformation, or if the Legislature is the entity to move it forward the Board needs to include them (Armando played the advocacy role)

- Education Committees and Boards are not fiscal and tax policy experts, and the people who are need to take this on
 - The Governance bill that passed gives the Board and the Commissioner significant authority on the outcomes
 - The Board should rename the “redistricting commission”
 - The Board should narrow its focus and have one or two priorities, and the commissioner is responsible for ensuring that
 - Need a template to talk with local boards about with H.66 (voluntary consolidation) and the State Board should be actively supporting it
 - Need a person, a champion to be the spokesperson, mediator for that topic
 - Legislators describe the Board as irrelevant, confusion over chain of command over the commissioner (since appointed by governor), do the Board and Commissioner reflect the positions of the governor)
 - Need more regular meetings of this sort (but not necessarily)
 - Policy making bodies are Board, Legislature and Governor, not all in agreement
 - What is the action the Board takes as a result of the Policy Commission Report?
 - Fix the piece about conduct of legislative activity
 - Board should focus on keeping a principal in the school
 - Professional development for principals and teachers
 - Structure future meetings to encourage increased dialogue
 - Perhaps use Public to be Heard agenda item differently
 - Unclear when Board takes a position or makes decisions, where that comes from
 - Vermont Standards Board of Professional Educators sets policy and aligned with the Opportunities to Learn and Roots of Success
 - Two needs – more conducive climate to advance initiatives and better structure of communication
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Item K: SBE Annual Evaluation

Facilitated by David Ruff, Board members reviewed and discussed its annual evaluation.

4:30 p.m. **Recess until Tuesday a.m.**

6:00 p.m. Dinner (SBE members)

Tuesday, June 15, 2010

Reconvene – Fayneese Miller reconvened the meeting at 8:49 a.m.

Item L: Reflections from Monday

The Board should examine the places in statute where they do have the authority to make changes and do so. The restructuring commission may consider creating a rubric for defining elements of a successful merger and criteria for doing so. Commissioner Vilaseca is considering a recommendation of a 15:1 student:teacher ratio under the Education Quality Standards. The Board plans to spend time on its agenda to plan to be effective during the coming legislative session, and include that in the Strategic Plan.

Item M: Review SBE and Commissioner Roles & Responsibilities

See notes from Monday p.m. discussion.

Item N: Strategic Plan Development

Need an implementation plan, measures, and communications plan. Deputy Commissioner Rae Ann Knopf and Commissioner Vilaseca will come back with a DOE Operations Plan in October. Updates will be provided in August and September. In the meantime, the current draft will be made available for public comment.

Item O: Wrap Up, Future Agendas, and Adjourn

Board members and Carol King reviewed items for August and coming meetings. The Board expressed its appreciation to facilitator David Ruff.

Adjournment

Motion: At 1:46 p.m., Stephan Morse moved, seconded by Brian Vachon, to adjourn the June 14-15, 2010 meeting of the State Board of Education.

Minutes recorded by Jill Remick

Minutes prepared by Carol King